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Supporters of Salvador guerrillas begin rally

By Bill Gertz
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American sympathizers of the Marxist guerrillas seeking to overthrow the government of El Salvador are pressing a three-day campaign here to rally support against U.S. activities in Central America.

The U.S. Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, or CISPES, which openly supports the Marxist guerrillas, opened the first national convention Saturday at American University, with about 300 participants chanting, "F-M-I-N."

The initials stand for the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, political arm of the guerrilla movement.

Danny Lewis, a CISPES spokesman, said 150 CISPES chapters from as far away as California are meeting to formulate a national strategy. The Saturday session was open to all interested people and was followed by two secret sessions yesterday and today, where an estimated 45 to 65 program proposals are being debated. The group was also scheduled to choose its national leaders.

"It's our first national convention, the subject of which is 'Working to Stop U.S. Intervention in Central America,'" Mr. Lewis said.

Among the speakers at Saturday's session were Louis Mendez, a counselor from the Nicaraguan Embassy in Washington, and Salvador Sanabria, a representative of the FMLN.

Julie Meyer, a regional coordinator for CISPES, urged participants to defy the recent U.S. embargo against Nicaragua by continuing "to drink their coffee and eat their bananas."

On the war in El Salvador, Miss Meyer told the gathering, "We will win the other front of the U.S. war," apparently a reference to CISPES' propaganda activities on behalf of the FMLN.

Mr. Mendez called the CIA "the most sophisticated terrorist apparatus" and said Nicaragua's military buildup was "different" because it has the support of "the people."

"We also have a few rifles and some

ammunition," Mr. Mendez declared. He said the Sandinistas have not hesitated "to bring the weapons to the people" an indirect reference to the recent influx of Soviet bloc weapons.

The Reagan administration regards Nicaragua's arms buildup as provocative and far beyond defensive requirements. The Soviet Union in recent months has delivered a number of advanced helicopter gunships, according to the administration.

Topics scheduled for discussion during the convention include "Congressional Pressure," "Government and Right-Wing Harassment of the Solidarity Movement," and "Vietnam-Era Lessons."

A number of groups sympathetic to the Salvadoran guerrillas participated in the convention, among them the Free South Africa Movement, SANE, an anti-nuclear energy group, and proponents of various disarmament movements.

CISPES publications have called the Marxist guerrillas "legitimate representatives of the Salvadoran people."

The group claims to have 10,000 supporters nationwide, many of them students, but experts believe its support has waned in recent months, due to the success of Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte in gathering popular support both in El Salvador and in the United States.